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GOD'S OUTCAST

ALL CLEAR OF MY FAITH

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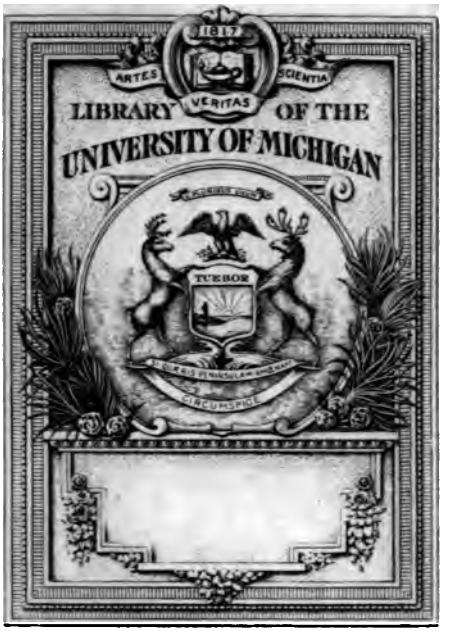
THREE PLAYS BY

J. HARTLEY MANNERS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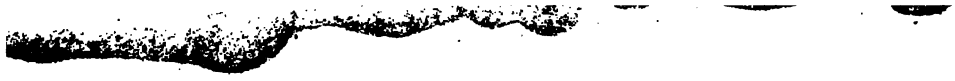

THREE PLAYS

ALL CLEAR
GOD OF MY FAITH
AND
GOD'S OUTCAST

BY J. HARTLEY MANNERS

PEG O' MY HEART
A Novel on the Comedy

HAPPINESS
and Two Other Plays

WRECKAGE
An Arrangement in
Three Acts

OUT THERE
A Dramatic Composition

THREE PLAYS

ALL CLEAR
GOD OF MY FAITH
AND
GOD'S OUTCAST

BY

J. HARTLEY MANNERS

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GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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FOREWORD

Written during the horrors of the unjust and cruel war forced by Germany upon civilisation, these plays, founded on actual incidents, may serve to keep alive remembrance of some of the barbarous outrages perpetrated by the Hun on innocent and wretched peoples. The attitude of many who took no active part in the recent strife is to urge people to forget as quickly as possible that such cowardly brutalities were ever committed and to insist, now that peace has come through the defeat-at-arms of the Prussian hordes, that business and social relations be resumed with Germany as in pre-war days. I contend that no civilised human being who is a free agent will do either. Whenever we are asked to speak to or trade with Germans let us glimpse back but a few years and recall the atrocities in Belgium and Northern France from which the populations of those devastated lands will suffer for generations. German soil is untouched. She is preparing to flood the world with her agents in order to restore the prestige she lost by her wanton, dastardly and atrocious acts. She will again attempt to undermine the business of civilised countries, betray the hospitality of their citizens and spread foul German propaganda in every decent community. It is for

civilised peoples to take their stand *now* against such an invasion. And they *will* if they remember the old, the crippled, the women and little children done to death, from the air, in poverty-stricken districts; if they revive in their minds the murders at sea of poor fishermen and the sailors and passengers on undefended ships; if they keep ever-present the loathing they felt when their gallant sons, brothers and husbands who went to France in the sacred cause of Liberty were poisoned as vermin by the cowardly and malignant Prussian. War had at one time a majesty. As conducted by the Prussian hordes, led by their infamous officers, it descended to actions more unspeakable than history records of the savage or the beast. Let civilisation grasp the all-too-evident fact that they are a race apart, unfit to associate with, and the great lesson of the terrible holocaust will have been learnt and some definite good come out of the years of travail.

Already German propaganda is spreading throughout the United States. It is primarily directed against America's strongest ally—Great Britain. Individuals and newspapers of pro-German sympathies daily attack at street corners, in meetings, and in print the country through whose intervention civilisation was saved, the waterways of the world held open, the German fleet rendered powerless, so that troops came from every corner of the world in order that barbarity could be crushed. When men attack Great Britain from the platform or in print they become self-accused German-sympathisers, and as such are a danger in civilised com-

munities. It is the duty of every citizen who loves liberty and fair-play to counteract by every means in his or her power the dangerous, insidious teachings of such German-sympathisers, masquerading under many guises, against the country that has given to the United States the groundwork of her just laws and the inspiration of her glorious Freedom.

J. HARTLEY MANNERS.

December, 1919.

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Written August, 1918

ALL CLEAR

A Protest

"He'll watch over the weakest
Until the 'All Clear,' "

[From a hymn written by a child, aged 7 years, as a prayer to God for protection during the Hun air raids over the poverty-stricken sections of London. Poor women and little children were the chief sufferers from this form of German barbarity.]

THE PERSONS IN THE PROTEST.

MATTHEW BLOUNT, D.D.

"VARNISH"

"LEGGY"

NORAH

The incident, true in substance, veracious in detail, occurs in an unhappy section of London where the struggle for life is keenest, the opportunities for joy remote. Into these wretched districts the incomparable (!) German warriors brought desolation and violent death. Of such brutes is the kingdom of the Hun.

ALL CLEAR

Notes.—*"TAKE COVER"* in six-inch letters.

The "WARNING" is the explosion of a bomb.

The "ALL CLEAR" signal is a bugle call by boy scouts — "Da, da!".

The incident takes place in a little room in a tenement house. It is about half-past-eight at night in the early winter. A moaning wind rises and falls, whistles and screams without. It does not disturb the play of a sturdy little boy of ten and a thin, pale, active little girl of nine. Both are of the very poor. Their clothes have been repeatedly mended. Their boots are broken. But their spirits are high and their voices shrill as they bend their best energies to the task in hand.

In the fireplace a dim fire is feebly smouldering. On the hob is a kettle. Hard by a battered, grimy dresser holds the few utensils necessary for the meagre wants of the occupants. A rough table with a faded, cheap cloth is set for supper. It consists of half a loaf of bread and some margarine. A cup and saucer stand ready for the war-time stimulant of the very poor — tea.

The room is below the street level. A small, square window looks out into the area. The blind is drawn. The street door opens direct from the area into the

room. Some six steps separate the room from the street.

A flickering oil lamp burns unsteadily on the centre of the table. Two beds are in the far corner. One is very small.

The game on which the children are intent is known as "Zepps" and graphically, through the medium of a child's observation, portrays the outstanding features of the early Zeppelin raids on the city of London.

The little boy has smeared on a large piece of soiled paper with the black heads of used matches the words "Take Cover," and has pinned it on the front of his ragged jacket. He is standing at the top of the steps, very erect, shoulders well back, and head high.

BOY

Are ye ready?

GIRL

Where will I be?

BOY

Walk across as if ye wos in the street.

GIRL

All right! [*Runs across to the corner where the beds are.*]

BOY

Go! An' not too fast! [*Girl walks daintily across, picking her steps. Boy, tapping his chest with the "Notice" on it and assuming as deep and commanding*

a voice as he can muster.] Take Cover! Take Cover! Down to the cellar! Indoors everyone! Quick as you can! Take Cover! Take Cover! [*He moves slowly down the steps. The little girl gives a cry and runs back near the fireplace, moaning, and pressing her fingers to her ears as though to shut out the sound of guns. The boy rushes to the fireplace, tears off the paper, takes up the fire-irons, clambers up on to the table, and cries.*] Boom! Boom! Splatter! Boom! Boom! Boom! Crash! [*Throws the fire-irons on the floor.*]

GIRL

[*Faintly.*] Oh!

BOY

Louder!

GIRL

Oh!

BOY

Much louder! Ye've been hit!

GIRL

[*Loudly.*] Oh!

BOY

Fall down! [*The little girl falls.*] Go on! "My head! My head!"

GIRL

My head? My head!

BOY

Go on! [*Excitedly.*] Die! Ah-h-h!

GIRL

Ah-h-h! [*She closes her eyes and falls gingerly back.*]

BOY

[*Jumps down and snatches up the "Notice," pins it on again, runs up the steps, and in a deep voice calls.*] "All Clear!" [*Girl sits up.*] Lie down! Ye're dead! [*Girl falls back.*] "All Clear!" [*Moves down the steps.*] Ah! One struck here! Bad business! [*Marches across and looks down at little girl.*] Dear, dear, dear! Her head blown off! Very bad business! Poor thing! Gi'e me a 'and, Alf! We'll taike 'er to the mortch'ry! [*Bends down to pick her up.*] 'Eavy, ain't she?

[*A loud knock sounds at the street door. The girl springs up frightenedly.*]

BOY

[*In a whisper.*] Wait a minit! [*He picks up the fire-irons and puts them back in the fireplace, takes off the "Notice" and crushes it into a ball which he thrusts into his trousers pocket.*]

[*Knock at door is heard again.*]

BOY

[*Whispers.*] All right! [*The little girl runs up the steps and opens the door. A grave, middle-aged, weary-looking man in the garb of a clergyman of the Church of England is standing patiently. He is the Reverend Matthew Blount.*]

BLOUNT

Mrs. Drind lives here?

GIRL

Yes, sir.

BLOUNT

Is she in?

GIRL

No, sir.

BLOUNT

Oh! Will she be long?

GIRL

What's the time?

BLOUNT

[*Consulting his watch.*] Ten minutes to nine.

GIRL

No, sir. She won't be long.

BLOUNT

[*Coming in, closing the door, walking down the steps and looking at the flushed boy and the excited little girl.*] Are you her children?

GIRL

[*Shaking her head.*] No, sir.

BOY

[*Pointing to the small bed in the corner.*] That's hers.

BLOUNT

[*Goes over and looks at the little bed.*] Boy?

BOY

[*Disdainfully.*] Naa.

BLOUNT

How old is she?

GIRL

Three, sir.

BOY

Go on! Look at her. Ye can't wake her. Doctor's given her a draught.

BLOUNT

[*Turning back the cover and looking at the sleeping child.*] Is she ill?

GIRL

Yes, sir.

BOY

Only a cold.

GIRL

We're minding her.

BOY

She is. I'm keepin' 'er company.

BLOUNT

[*Smiling.*] What's your name?

BOY

"Varnish."

BLOUNT

[*Laughing.*] Why?

BOY

'Cause me faice is alwa's shiny. Hers is "Leggy." Look at 'em! [*Pointing at the little girl's long legs which the shortness of her dress accentuates.*]

BLOUNT

And what are your other names?

GIRL

Povey.

BOY

Balch.

BLOUNT

I've not seen you at St. Luke's.

BOY

Naa.

GIRL

[*Shakes her head.*]

BLOUNT

Don't you go to church?

BOY

Mother does. I mind the kids.

GIRL

Me, too.

BLOUNT

Where do you live?

GIRL

3 Flint's Rents.

BOY

1 Mason Mews.

BLOUNT

[*Making note in book.*] I'll call on your mothers.

BOY

Better not! Mine's a Methydist.

GIRL

An' mine's Salvation Army.

BLOUNT

I'll call, just the same.

BOY

All right! But I warned ye!

BLOUNT

Your mothers might like you to have a little holiday in the country.

BOY

Mine wouldn't.

GIRL

Nor mine. She couldn't spare me. She's away all day—saime as Mrs. Drind—on'y Mother's home by six.

Then I come 'ere till nine an' watch 'er. [*Pointing to the little bed.*]

BOY

I don' want to go, anyway. [*Shakes his head.*] I'd miss it all.

BLOUNT

What would you miss?

BOY

The Zepps. See the raid larst night?

BLOUNT

[*Sighs.*] Yes.

BOY

I didn't think it was much to maike a fuss about.

BLOUNT

Didn't you?

BOY

Did you?

BLOUNT

Weren't you afraid?

BOY

[*Contemptuously.*] Naa! I ain't afraide o' them air-pins.

GIRL

Mother an' me goes to the Army Shelter an' waits till it's over.

BLOUNT

Where do *you* go? [*To the boy.*]

BOY

To the top o' Jubilee Hill an' watch 'em—when I can dodge Mother. She goes down in Mrs. Parfitt's cellar—the butcher's. Stinkin' down there! Miss all the fun, an' the noise scares ye! I like to be up high where ye can see everything. Wasn' that feller larst night a blinkin' coward? Wouldn' fight! Ran away! [*Regretfully.*] I wish they'd got the blighter.

BLOUNT

You shouldn't be out at such a time, my little man. It isn't fair to your mother—or to yourself. You might be struck.

BOY

Not me! I'd dodge 'em. I'm very quick. An' the bombs drops very slow.

GIRL

I'm not afraid now. I used to be when they come first. But one night me an' mother ran into a shelter, an' the preacher was there—like you, 'e was—an' 'e told me not to be afraid o' the noise o' the guns. 'E said it was somethin' to be thankful for an' glad about. An' 'e said I ought to thank God for every sound of a gun 'cause it meant pertection. The greater the sound the safer we was, 'e said. So I don' mind 'em now. W'en

the great big 'uns go orf we all say, "Thank God for that!"

BLOUNT

[*Smiling.*] The preacher was quite right. What shelter do you go to?

GIRL

St. Bartholomew's. Nice there! Gives us corfy an' caikes w'ile the raid's on, and keep singin' all the time. Me an' mother kind o' look forward to 'em. An' we 'ave a poetess.

BLOUNT

[*Smiling.*] Oh?

GIRL

Yaas. She ain't eight yet. Seven-an'-'arf. 'Er mother's in the Christmas-cracker traide. Wrote a 'ymn, all by 'erself, she did. Without no 'elp from no one. Like to 'ear it?

BLOUNT

Yes. [*Sits.*]

GIRL

[*Recites.*] God is our refuge.
Don't be dismayed.
He will protect us
All through the raid.
When danger is threatening
We never need fear.
He'll watch over the weakest
Until the "All Clear."
Ain't it good?

BLOUNT

Yes. Very good indeed.

BOY

Sickenin'! [*Laughs derisively.*] Blinkin' silly! [*Sits up on the table dangling his feet.*]

BLOUNT

I'll tell you of another little girl who is as much a hero as any of the brave soldiers fighting to defend civilization. Her name is Maggie Brice. She came in one night during a raid to my Relief Depot with her little brother of seven. The mother was missing. The two little children were homeless. After they had been told where to go for the night the little girl remembered that there was a baby belonging to the woman upstairs where they lived that had been asleep when the bomb exploded. The mother had gone out shopping, and hadn't been seen since. The two little children set out to find the baby but half-way there the boy's courage failed him and he ran back to his new friends.

BOY

What a blinker!

BLOUNT

[*Smiles at him, then continues.*] But Maggie went on, and in the dark groped about among the ruins and piles of bricks until she found the baby. It was then too dark to venture back, so she sat nursing the baby in the ruins all night. The next morning she arrived

triumphantly at my Relief Depot with the baby in her arms.

GIRL

[*Excitedly.*] Was the baby's mother all right?

BLOUNT

Yes. Her joy at seeing it was wonderful.

GIRL

What a nice story!

BLOUNT

It's true.

BOY

Pretty good for a girl! I don' mind the dark. I wish I was big anuff to go up an' fight the blinkers.

BLOUNT

Bring your mother to my Relief Depot when the next raid comes. I'll take good care of you.

BOY

[*Shakes his head.*] Mother likes the cellar. An' I want to watch. I ain't afraid of anythin' them Germans does.

BLOUNT

Ah! Where does Mrs. Drind work?

BOY

Black & Grimm's match factory.

[*The door opens quietly and Norah enters. She closes the door and comes down the steps. She is a young, pale, sad woman of 25, poorly but respectably dressed. She smiles wearily at the children and hurries over to the little bed, but stops when she sees Blount.*]

BLOUNT

I am the rector of St. Luke's Church. May I have a few moments?

NORAH

Yes, sir. [*To girl, as she goes to the bed.*] How is she?

GIRL

Been asleep a hour. Doctor caime an' give 'er somethin'.

NORAH

Did she cough much?

GIRL

Quite a bit till 'e came. 'E says she's goin' on very nice, though.

NORAH

Did he?

GIRL

[*Nods.*] She's on the mend, 'e says, if she goes on as she's bin goin'.

NORAH

[*Arranging the covers and smoothing the child's hair and pressing her brow and hands.*] Asleep an hour?

GIRL

More 'n a *hour*. Not a sound.

BOY

An' we 'ad a raid, too.

NORAH

[*Starts anxiously.*] What?

BOY

[*Nods affirmatively.*] We played at "Zepps." [*Imitates.*] Take Cover! Bang! Bang! Crash! She got killed. I was just taikin' 'er to the mortch'ry w'en 'e came in. [*Laughs.*]

NORAH

[*Shivering.*] Why do you play such games?

BOY

Blinkin' good game!

[*Norah looks at the clergyman, who smiles at her.*]

BLOUNT

He doesn't seem to be disturbed by them. To him they just suggest a new game. [*Pats the boy's head.*]

NORAH

What would become of them if anything happened to their parents? What would become of 'er if anything happened to me?

BLOUNT

[*Gravely.*] Exactly! The children suffer the most.

NORAH

[*Cuts some bread, covers it with margarine, and gives it to the children. Then she gives the little girl a penny.*] Come again to-morrow evening before Mrs. Maseley goes, will ye?

GIRL

Yes, Mrs. Drind.

BLOUNT

[*Gives them a coin each.*] Tell your mothers you met me, that we became good friends, and that I will call on them. It is not a question of what religions your mothers are. All are one in protection and charity.

BOY

All right! But Mother's a real hobstinate Methydist. So Father says—blinkin' hobstinate. '-Bye. [*Runs up the steps, opens the door, and looks out.*] Fine night for a raid! Blinkin' dark!

NORAH

[*Shudders, puts her arms protectingly around the little girl, and takes her to the steps. Calls to the boy.*] Ye'll take her to her door?

BOY

'Course I will. Come along, "Leggy." Ta, ta!

[*The little children run out into the night. Norah closes the door and comes down the steps.*]

BLOUNT

We have a Shelter—a Relief Depot—in connection with St. Luke's. I should be so glad if you would bring your baby to us whenever the raids happen.

NORAH

I haven't been able to take her out for weeks, sir. She's 'ad a cold—a bad cold. I wouldn' dare. It 'uld kill 'er. They've lost so many babies round 'ere takin' 'em out o' their warm beds into the night air. Their little lungs carn' stand it. Pneumonia—that's what they gets. An' they die. Lots of 'em go that way.

BLOUNT

I know.

NORAH

We 'ave some charnce if we stay indoors. An' we're below the street 'ere.

BLOUNT

You'd be much safer at the Shelter. And we take special care of little children. Wrap her up warmly. Do come.

NORAH

All right, sir. Soon as she's better. W'en we was in Mile End, an' she was well, I took 'er to one once. Very kind they was, too. I usedn't to think much o' church. Father didn't 'old with it w'en we was little. I know more w'at it means since we went to that Shelter.

BLOUNT

I'm glad of that.

NORAH

First time I went I was just shakin' wi' fear. The guns was shootin' that loud an' farst. W'en I saw the people a-singin' round a harmonium wi' the bombs a-droppin' outside I couldn' think 'ow they could do it. I was most dead o' fright, an' 'oldin' 'er close to me breast. Cryin' she was, too. Then someone started an 'ymn, "O, for a faith that will not shrink," an' I joined in—though me voice trembled so I could 'ardly speak. By the time we'd finished I didn' seem to fear nothin' much. W'en she gets well I'm goin' to church reg'lar. Father made me bitter about church. 'E didn't believe in nothin'; Atheist, 'e called 'isself. But I carn' be bitter about a place that was good to me an' 'er.

BLOUNT

Where's your husband?

NORAH

Killed in France these three years.

BLOUNT

[*Commiseratingly.*] Oh.

NORAH

"Gassed" 'e was, sir.

BLOUNT

[*Nods.*] Have you parents living?

NORAH

No, sir. They was murdered.

BLOUNT

Murdered?

NORAH

The Germans murdered them, sir. Killed 'em from the air. Murdered two old people. Mother 'adn't been out o' bed for two years. Paralysed she was. Burnt to death—she an' Father. 'E wouldn' leave 'er. Found 'em together—burned to death.

BLOUNT

[*Contracts his shoulders in pain.*] Horrible.

NORAH

German work, sir. The beasts! [*Blount sits thinking.*] W'en I was small we used to think 'ow wonderful soldiers was, sir. An' they was, too. Father took me w'en I was a kid to see 'em come back from South Africa. I can just remember 'em an' the crowds o' people cheerin'. *They* was brave. But they wasn' Germans. Germans! [*Makes a moue of disgust as though expectorating something foul.*] *They're* a brave lot!

Guns ain't enough. Swords ain't enough. Too clean for Germans, they are. They 'ad to find somethin' cowardly an' cruel an' dirty. An' they found it. Poison, that's what they found—poison-gas. My Luke got it. My man died that way. Choked to death. It's a foul death for brave men, ain't it, sir? Poisoned like vermin! My Luke! On'y been married six months, sir. 'E rushed orf d'rec'ly it broke out. So 'appy an' cheerful, 'e was, sir. "I'll come back a general!" That's w'at 'e said. "See if I don't!" 'e said. Just choked to death 'e was. Sergeant they'd maide 'im, too. 'E never saw 'er. [*Pointing to the child.*] A good man 'e was to me, sir. Never drank nothin', an' fond of 'is 'ome. Was lookin' forward to 'er, too. 'Oped she'd be a boy. 'E'd 'a' been so proud of 'er. An' everythin' goin' so well till it broke out! Too good to larst, I used to think as I lay awaike o' nights thinkin' 'ow 'appy we was. An' so it turned out. Too good to larst! 'Ere I am now, all alone—me an' 'er.

BLOUNT

How much do you earn?

NORAH

I got 'is pension—an' I maike eight shillin's at the fact'ry. I do pretty well. 'Cept w'en she's sick. Then there's doctors' bills an' med'cine.

BLOUNT

If I could get you away from London into munition work, would you go? You would be safer. It would be

healthier for your baby. And they'd pay you much better.

NORAH

I tried to afore I got this plaice. They said I wasn't strong enough. They want healthy, strong people, sir.

BLOUNT

We have a little place in Hampshire connected with St. Luke's where we send children and sick people from time to time for a week—longer if it isn't full. Would you like that?

NORAH

I'd lose me plaice, sir. 'Undreds waitin' for it.

BLOUNT

We have also a committee for finding employment. If you got really strong we might get you a good position under the government.

NORAH

[*Dully, with no enthusiasm.*] It 'ould be nice of ye, sir. But no one wants ye if ye've got a baby an' yer 'ealth's poor. Babies 'ave a 'ard time in London, sir. I orf'n wonder so many of 'em comes through. She don' seem to pick up as she should. No light or air much 'ere. If anythin' 'appened to 'er I wouldn' want to live. She's all I got. An' so like 'im! [*Her eyes full.*]

BLOUNT

If you are willing I'll have you both sent to Hampshire as soon as there's room. There you'll have fresh air and simple good food. Your baby will thrive on it.

NORAH

All right! An' thankin' ye!

BLOUNT

[*Rising.*] And I will take up the other matter of employment in the morning.

NORAH

Cruel, dependin' on strangers, ain't it? [*Wistfully.*] Luke 'ad a fortnight's 'oliday every year. W'en we was keepin' comp'ny 'e used to taike us to the sea. W'en we was married 'e took me to Wales. Beautiful it was. An' plenty o' friends we 'ad then. Alwa's laughin' an' jokin' 'e was. Everyone liked 'im. An' now 'e's lyin' in a foreign country without a stone to mark 'im. If 'e'd 'a' died by a bullet or a sword or a cannon, w'y it was w'at 'e went out to taike a charnce of. But to be choked by poison, oh, my Gawd! [*Fiercely.*] I usedn't to believe in 'ell, sir. I thought it was a word to frighten simple people an' children with. I didn't believe there was a Gawd who'd maike people suffer for all eternity, saime as churches taught. Now I 'ope 'e does. *'E* wouldn't be a good Gawd if 'e didn't. I 'opes the

brutes 'oo burnt my father an' mother burn theirselves, so I do. An' burn forever. There should be a hell for them. W'at good does it do them to kill us poor people? Frighten us into maikin' peace is w'at a woman told me. If I 'ad my way we'd maike no peace wi' them beasts till the larst of 'em was burnin' in hell. I 'ope the wretches 'oo poisoned my 'usband is poisoned with sulphur and brimstone as long as there's time.

BLOUNT

[*Gently.*] Don't say that.

NORAH

[*Fiercely.*] I mean it, sir. I 'ate 'em. [*Her hands clenching.*] I 'ate 'em.

BLOUNT

We shouldn't hate. We must try to forgive them as He did those who crucified Him. They know not what they do.

NORAH

[*Hotly.*] Oh, yes, they do. They know all right, sir. The man who sends them things over us knows w'at 'e's doin'. 'E sends 'em to murder us. An' the fellers w'at drops bombs on poor, starvin' old people an' babies knows w'at they're doin', too. An' w'en this war's over an' they're licked, I 'ope they'll torture 'em first an' then kill 'em, sir. That's w'at I 'ope. An' thousan's like me. An' I pray to Gawd that 'e 'as an 'ell so that

their souls may go to everlasting torment. That's w'at I pray, sir.

BLOUNT

My poor young woman, no good can come out of hate.

NORAH

Then there's little good likely to come out of me. There's only one thing I've got to love, sir,—my baby. W'ile I'm with 'er, or thinkin' of 'er, I believe in a good Gawd. I believe 'e wouldn' let no 'arm come to 'er. But if they kill 'er . . . [*She moves away and looks down at her baby a moment, then goes back to Blount.*] 'Er poor father! Choked, 'e was, sir. That was German work, wasn't it, sir? *Germans!* If anyone wants to insult ye 'e calls ye *German* now, sir. It's the filthiest word ye can use round 'ere. The sweepin's of our prisons are gennelmen compared to *them.* Whatever *they've* done, they're payin' for it, ain't they? There ain't a gaol in England as 'olds a man 'oo burnt old men an' women an' little children to death, is there, sir? . . . Forgive 'em! I'll never forgive 'em. . . . If it wasn't for 'er I'd arst 'em to send me out in the woman's army, sir. I'd like to be doin' somethin' in the sound of our guns, sir. I'd like to be near our guns. Every time they'd fire I'd say to meself, "There goes a dirty German's soul to 'ell." I say it now w'en I 'ear our guns a-shootin' at them beasts in the air. Fine work for men, ain't it? Droppin' death out o' the sky on us. 'Ow long d'ye suppose Gawd'll let 'em go on, sir?

BLOUNT

We're in his hands. This war is the scourge He has sent to chasten us with.

NORAH

Is it?

BLOUNT

It is. And we must bear it because it is His will that we should. Some day it will pass—some blessed day!—and though our souls have been tried we shall be the richer for it.

NORAH

Richer for it? 'Ow much richer shall *I* be, sir? No one—nothin' left but 'er. An' w'ile there's light in the day I'm indoors workin' to keep even this place over 'er. An' every night w'en I get back I'm wonderin' if she's died durin' the day. An' w'en they come in the dark me 'ead's in a panic lest they do for 'er. I sit 'ere, watchin' over 'er, me arms around 'er, waitin' for the "All Clear." . . . W'en them brutes is beaten down so's they can never rise again—then it'll be "All Clear." But not till then, sir.

BLOUNT

Don't think I can't feel for you. I do. Come to us. We'll try to lighten your way. You'll find the day easier and danger less difficult to face if you keep saying to yourself, "It is His will."

NORAH

I don't believe it. I don't believe it. No Gawd could be so cruel as to let them brutes torture people as they've done. If there was a good Gawd 'e'd send fire from 'eaven to destroy 'em, an' as 'E won't *we've* got to. [*Her hands clench and unclench nervously.*] Destroy 'em! That's it! Destroy 'em! Till none are left! Not one! The beasts! Beasts! Beasts! [*Her voice faints away though her lips continue to move.*]

BLOUNT

We will gladly welcome you at our Shelter—as soon as you can bring her. [*Making note in book.*] Tomorrow I will see about a little trip to the country. That will be splendid for you both. Keep a good heart, Mrs. Drind. Others are suffering too, and not a word of complaint. I have not escaped. I, too, am alone, Mrs. Drind. The war has claimed everyone near and dear to me. Every one. And I say in all belief and sincerity, "It is His will." I say it from my heart. That is because I believe in Him. I do not permit myself hatred. It cripples. It tightens the heart.

NORAH

Mine is tight, sir. I feel like bursting sometimes w'en I think of my poor 'usband and my parents. I got to 'ate. An' I do.

BLOUNT

[*Sadly.*] Justice is His. He will deliver us from our enemies if we believe in Him. He will render justice to them.

NORAH

I want to see justice given 'em now—now.

BLOUNT

[*Realises he can no longer persuade; touches her gently on the shoulder.*] God protect you! Good night!

NORAH

Good-night, sir!

[*He goes out. The wind rushes in through the door as he opens it, and moans as he shuts it behind him. Norah first looks at the sleeping child, then gives a gesture of great weariness. She goes to the fireplace and puts the kettle on the dull fire, then drags herself, growing more and more listless every moment, to the table and cuts some bread. She tries to eat it. Puts it down. Sighs. Goes over to the bed and sits beside it, looking down at the child.*] I am not to 'ate them, my dear one. I'm not to 'ate the beasts 'oo poisoned your father an' burned mine an' me poor mother. I'm not to 'ate the brutes 'oo took away from you all joy before you ever came into the world. An' thousands an' thousands are like us to-night—all alone, facing death—through them. *We'll* 'ate 'em, dear, won't we? An' as long as I've breath I'll curse 'em. An' so will you if you live and

grow up into a woman with not a sight to gladden your little eyes, not a soul near ye but me. We're the only ones near each other, dear.

[*The child moves uneasily and moans slightly. Norah smooths the child's pillow and makes it easier for her, then drags herself listlessly to the door and bolts it, pours some water from the now boiling kettle into the cracked teapot and leaves it on the hob to draw. She clears away her hat and coat, making a place at the table. Faintly, from the distance, comes the sound of guns. She listens, terrified. People can be heard running, and low sounds of alarm come from the street. The sound of the guns increases. A voice of authority is heard all down the street, beginning quietly, growing louder as the man passes, and then dying away, calling in stern, admonishing tones, "Take cover!" "Take cover!" "Take cover!" She gives a little gasp, puts out the light, hurries over to the little bed, kneels down beside it, and spreads herself over the child, praying breathlessly and inaudibly. The guns grow louder, the sounds nearer and nearer. Explosions are heard from afar. Rapid-fire guns increase in volume until they seem over the house. A loud explosion comes as a bomb explodes in front of the house. The door is blown in, the place quivers, then a mass of debris pours in onto the bed. Norah gives a long, wailing cry, and falls away from the bed. Then silence. The guns go on and on. Explosions can be heard from distant parts as the raiders go on on their work of destruction. Two policemen ap-*

pear in the opening made by the bomb. Each has his little placard, "Take Cover!" With the light of the lanterns fastened on their belts they move down the now shaky steps.]

FIRST POLICEMAN

Just the basement struck. The rest of the house is all right.

SECOND POLICEMAN

Who lives 'ere?

FIRST POLICEMAN

Only a woman and her child.

SECOND POLICEMAN

Perhaps she got out in time.

FIRST POLICEMAN

No fire, anyway. Better put this out. [*Takes up kettle and pours the water on the dull fire. It hisses in protest as it goes out.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN

When they sit round the peace-table I 'ope they maikes 'em pay for this.

FIRST POLICEMAN

Not they! Six months after the war's over they'll be sellin' German goods all over London.

SECOND POLICEMAN

Likely as not! We brought one of 'em down. See it?

FIRST POLICEMAN

An' then w'at? They'll give 'em a military funeral at the taxpayers' expense an' taike us orf our regular jobs to keep the crowd back. An' if they're alive they'll be sent up to Donnington Hall an' fed on the fat o' the land.

SECOND POLICEMAN

I'd hang 'em, out in the open. That's w'at I'd do.

FIRST POLICEMAN

So would any Christian.

[*During the foregoing they have been searching through the ruins with the aid of their lanterns. He finds Norah.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN

Hello! [*He kneels down, puts the light on her face, and listens to her heart.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN

Is she alive?

FIRST POLICEMAN

Don't know. [*Waits.*] Yes. Only just, though. Where's the kid? [*Taking out a large handkerchief and wiping away the blood and dust.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN

[*Finds the shattered bed and turns his light on to a shapeless mass that once was Norah's little child. Under his breath he ejaculates.*] Oh, my Gawd!

FIRST POLICEMAN

Done in?

SECOND POLICEMAN

Just a mess.

FIRST POLICEMAN

The dirty brutes! Give me a hand! [*They go to each side of Norah and raise her gently.*] Get her down to the station. It's too far to the 'orspital. [*Norah opens her eyes and moans.*] Come on, ma'am! You'll be all right. She's comin' to. [*Moving her slowly across, half lifted off the ground.*]

NORAH

[*Faintly.*] Where's my baby?

FIRST POLICEMAN

It'll be all right, ma'am. Come along! [*They reach the steps.*]

NORAH

My baby! Where's my baby?

FIRST POLICEMAN

Lift her! Baby will be all right, ma'am. That's it!

NORAH

Where's—my—baby?

[*They carry her up the steps.*]

NORAH

Where's—my—baby?

[*They disappear into the street. The guns begin to grow fainter and fainter, then they stop. Footsteps are heard rushing past. Street cries. Laughter of children. The "All Clear!" is sounded. Faintly, from the distance, as if carried in on the breeze, comes the sound of Norah's tired, frightened voice of agony.*]

I—want—my—baby.

CURTAIN

Written July, 1917

GOD OF MY FAITH

A Play for Pacifists

In One Act

"If the God of my Faith be a liar
Who is it that I shall trust?"

THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

NELSON DARTREY

DERMOD GILRUTH

The action passes in Dartrey's Chambers in the late Spring of Nineteen Hundred and Fifteen.

[The lowering of the Curtain momentarily will denote the passing of several days.]

GOD OF MY FAITH

The curtain discloses a dark oak room. NELSON DARTREY *is seated at a writing table studying maps. He is a man in the early thirties, prematurely worn and old. His face is burned a deep brick colour and is sharpened by fatigue and loss of blood. His hair is sparse, dry and turning grey. Around the upper part of his head is a bandage covered largely by a black skull-cap. Of over average height the man is spare and muscular. The eye is keen and penetrating; his voice abrupt and authoritative. An occasional flash of humour brings an old-time twinkle to the one and heartiness to the other. He is wearing the undress uniform of a major in the British army. The door bell rings. With an impatient ejaculation he goes into the passage and opens the outer door. Standing outside, cheerfully humming a tune, is a large, forceful, breezy young man of twenty-eight. He is* DERMOD GILRUTH. *Splendid in physique, charming of manner, his slightly-marked Dublin accent lends a piquancy to his conversation. He has all the ease and poise of a travelled, polished young man of breeding.* DARTREY'S *face brightens as he holds out a welcoming hand.*

DARTREY

Hello, Gil.

GILRUTH

[*Saluting him as he laughs genially.*] May I come into officer's quarters?

DARTREY

I'm glad to have you. I'm quite alone with hours on my hands. [*He brings Gilruth into the room and wheels a comfortable leather arm chair in front of him.*] Sit down.

GILRUTH

Indeed I will not. Look at your desk there. I'll not interrupt your geography for more than a minute.

DARTREY

[*Forces him into the chair.*] I'm glad to get away from it. Why, you look positively boyish.

GILRUTH

And why not? I am a boy. [*Chuckles.*]

DARTREY

What are you so pleased with yourself about?

GILRUTH

The greatest thing in the world for youth and high spirits. I'm going to be married next week.

DARTREY

[*Incredulously.*] You're not?

GILRUTH

I tell you I am.

DARTREY

Don't be silly.

GILRUTH

What's silly about it?

DARTREY

Oh, I don't know.

GILRUTH

Of course you don't know. You have never tried it.

DARTREY

I should think not.

GILRUTH

Well, I'm going to and I want you to father me. Stand up beside me and see me through. Will you?

DARTREY

If you want me to.

GILRUTH

Well, I do want you to.

DARTREY

All right!

GILRUTH

You don't mind now?

DARTREY

My dear chap. It's charming of you to think of me.

GILRUTH

I've known you longer than anyone ever here. And I like you better. So there you are.

DARTREY

[*Laughing.*] Poor old Dermod! Well, well!

GILRUTH

There's nothing to laugh at, or "well, well" about.

DARTREY

Do I know the——?

GILRUTH

[*Shakes his head.*] She's never been over before. Everything will be new to her. I tell you it's going to be wonderful. I've planned out the most delightful trip through Ireland—she's Irish, too.

DARTREY

Is she?

GILRUTH

But, like me, born in America. She's crazy to see the old country.

DARTREY

She couldn't have a better guide.

GILRUTH

[*Enthusiastically.*] She's beautiful, she's brilliant, she's good—she's everything a man could wish.

DARTREY

That's the spirit. Will you make your home over here?

GILRUTH

No. We'll stay till the autumn. Then I must go back to America. But some day when all this fighting is over and people talk of something besides killing each other, I want to have a home in Ireland.

DARTREY

I suppose most of you Irishmen in America want to do that?

GILRUTH

Indeed they do not. Once they get out to America and do well they stay there and become citizens. My father did. Do you think he'd live in Ireland now?

Not he. He talks all the time about Ireland and the hated Sassenacks—that's what he calls you English—and he urges the fellows at home in the old country to fight for their rights. But since he made his fortune and became an American citizen the devil a foot has he ever put on Irish soil. He's always going, but he hasn't got there yet. And as for *living* there! Oh, no, America is good enough for him, because his interests are there. I want to live in Ireland because my heart is there. [*Springing up.*] Now I'm off. You don't know how happy you make me by promising to be my best man.

DARTREY

My dear fellow——

GILRUTH

And just wait until you see her. Eyes you lose yourself in, a voice soft as velvet: a brain so nimble that wit flows like music from her tongue. Poetry, too. She dances like thistledown and sings like a thrush. And with all that she's in love with me.

DARTREY

I'm delighted.

GILRUTH

I want her to meet you first. A snug little dinner before the wedding. She's heard so much against the English I want her to see the best specimen they've got.

[*Dartrey laughs heartily.*] I tell you if you pass muster with her you have the passport to Kingdom Come. [*Laughing as well as he grips* DARTREY'S *hand.*]

DARTREY

[*As they walk to the door.*] When will it be?

GILRUTH

Next Tuesday. I'll ring you up and give you the full particulars.

DARTREY

In church?

GILRUTH

Church? Cathedral! His Eminence will officiate.

DARTREY

Topping.

GILRUTH

Well, you see, we Irish only marry once. So we make an occasion of it.

DARTREY

Splendid. I'll look forward to it.

GILRUTH

[*Looking at the bandage.*] Is your head getting all right?

DARTREY

Oh dear, yes. It's quite healed up. I'll have this thing off in a day or two. [*Touching the bandage.*] I expect to be back in a few weeks.

GILRUTH

[*Anxiously.*] Again?

DARTREY

Yes.

GILRUTH

If ever a man had done his share, you have.

DARTREY

They need me. They need us all.

GILRUTH

The third time.

DARTREY

There are many who have done the same.

GILRUTH

[*Shudders.*] How long will it last?

DARTREY

Until the Hun is beaten.

GILRUTH

Years, eh?

DARTREY

It looks like it. We've hardly begun yet. It will take a year to really get the ball rolling. Then things will happen. Tell me: how do they feel in America? Frankly.

GILRUTH

All the people who matter are pro-Ally.

DARTREY

Are you sure?

GILRUTH

I'm positive.

DARTREY

Are you? Come, now.

GILRUTH

Why, of course I am.

DARTREY

They may be pro-Ally, but they're not pro-English.

GILRUTH

That's true. Many of them are not. But if ever the test comes, they will be.

DARTREY

[*Shakes his head doubtfully.*] I wonder. It seems a pity not to bury all the Bunker-Hill and Boston-tea-chest prejudices.

GILRUTH

You're right there.

DARTREY

Why your boys and girls are taught in their school-books to hate us.

GILRUTH

In places, they are. Now that I know the English a little I have been agitating to revise them. It all seems so damned cheap and petty for a big country to belittle a great nation, through the mouths of children.

DARTREY

There's no hatred like family hatred. After all, we're cousins, speaking the same tongue and with pretty much the same outlook.

GILRUTH

There's one race in America that holds back as strongly as it can any better understanding between the two countries, and that's my race—the Irish. And well I know it. I was brought up on it. There are men to-day, men of position, too, in our big cities who have openly said they want to see England crushed in this war.

DARTREY

So I've heard. It would be a sorry day for the rest of civilization, and particularly America, if we were.

GILRUTH

You can't convince them of that. They carry on the prejudices and hatred of generations. I have accused some of them of being actively pro-German; of tinkering with German money to foster revolution in Ireland.

DARTREY

Do you believe that?

GILRUTH

I do. Thank God there are not many of them. I have accused them of taking German money and then urging the poor unfortunate poets and dreamers to do the revoluting while they are safely three thousand miles away. I don't know of many who are willing to cross the water and do it themselves. Talking and writing seditious articles is safe. Take my own father. He says frankly that he doesn't want Germany to win because he hates Germans. Most Irishmen do. But all the same he wants to see England lose. All the doubtful ones I know, who don't dare come out in the open, speak highly of the French and are silent when England is mentioned. I blame a great deal of that on your Government. You take no pains to let the rest of the world know what England is doing. You and I know that

without the British fleet America wouldn't rest as easy as she does to-day, and without the little British army the Huns would have been in Paris and Calais months ago. We know that and so do many others. But the great mass of the people, particularly the Irish, cry all the time, "What is England doing?" Your government should see to it that they know what she's doing.

DARTREY

It's not headquarters' way.

GILRUTH

I know it isn't. And the more's the pity. Another thing where you went all wrong. Why not have let Asquith clear up the Irish muddle? Why truckle to a handful of disloyal North of Ireland traitors? If the Government had courtmartialed the ring leaders, tried the rest for treason and put the Irish Government in Dublin, why, man, three-quarters of the male population of the South of Ireland would be in the trenches now.

DARTREY

Don't let us get into that. I was one of the officers who mutinied. I would rather resign my commission than shoot down loyal subjects.

GILRUTH

[*Hotly.*] Loyal? Loyal? When they refused to carry out their Government's orders? When they deny

justice to a long suffering people? Loyal! Don't prostitute the word.

DARTREY

[*Angrily.*] I don't want to——

GILRUTH

[*Going on vehemently.*] It's just that kind of pig-headed ignorance that has kept the two countries from understanding each other. Why shouldn't Ireland govern herself. South Africa does. Australia does. And when you're in trouble they leap to your flag. Yet there is a country a few miles from you that sends the best of her people to your professions and they invariably get to the top of them. Irishmen have commanded your armies and Ireland has given you admirals for your fleet and at least one of us has been your Lord Chief Justice. Yet, by God, they can't be trusted to govern themselves. I tell you the English treatment of Ireland makes her the laughing-stock of the world.

DARTREY

[*Opens the door, then turns and looks straight at* GILRUTH.] My head bothers me. Will you kindly——

GILRUTH

[*All contrition.*] I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to blaze out. Do forgive me like a good fellow. It's an old sore of mine and sometimes it makes me wince. It did just now. Don't be mad with me.

[*The sound of a boy's voice calling newspapers is heard faintly in the distance; then the hoarse tones of a man shouting indistinctly; then a chorus of men and boys comes nearer and nearer calling of some calamity.* DARTREY *hurries out through the outer door.* GILRUTH *stands ashamed. He does not want to leave his friend in bad blood. He would like to put things right before going. He waits for* DARTREY *to come back.*

[*In a few moments* DARTREY *walks through the outer doorway and into the room. He is very white, very agitated, and his face is set and determined. He is reading the "special" edition of an evening paper with great "scare" head lines.*

[*The sound of the voices crying the news in the street grows fainter and fainter.*

[DARTREY *stops in front of* GILRUTH *and tries to speak, nothing coherent comes from his lips. He thrusts the paper into* GILRUTH'S *hands and watches his face as he reads.*

[GILRUTH *reads it once slowly, then rapidly. He stands immovable staring at the news-sheet. It slips from his fingers and he cowers down, stooping at the shoulders, glaring at the floor.*]

DARTREY

[*Almost frenzied.*] Now will your country come in? Now will they fight for civilization? A hundred of her men, women and children done to death. Is that war? Or is it murder? Already men are reading in New

York and Washington of the sinking of that ship and the murder of their people. What are they going to do? What are *you* going to do?

GILRUTH

[*Creeps unsteadily to the door; steadying himself with a hand on the lock; his back to the room. He speaks in a strange, far-off, quavering voice.*] She was on the *Lusitania!* Mona. She was on it. Mona was on it.

[*Creeps out through the street door and disappears.* DARTREY *looks after him.*]

[*The curtain falls and rises again in a few moments. Several days have elapsed.* DARTREY, *in full uniform, is busily packing his regimental kit. The bandage has been removed from his head. The telephone bell rings.* DARTREY *answers it.*]

DARTREY

Yes. Yes. Who is it? Oh! Do. Yes. No. Not at all. Come up. All right.

[*Replaces the receiver and continues packing. In a few moments the door bell rings.* DARTREY *opens the outer door and brings* GILRUTH *into the room. He is in deep mourning; is very white and broken. He seems grievously ill.* DARTREY *looks at him commiseratingly. He is sensitive about speaking.*]

GILRUTH

[*Faintly.*] Put up with me for a bit? Will you?

[DARTREY *just puts his hand on the man's shoulder.*]

[GILRUTH *sinks wearily and lifelessly into a chair.*]
She is buried.

DARTREY

What?

GILRUTH

[*Nods.*] She is buried. In Kensal Green. Half an hour ago.

DARTREY

[*In a whisper.*] They found her?

GILRUTH

[*Nods again.*] Picked up by some fishermen.

DARTREY

Queenstown?

GILRUTH

A few miles outside. I went there that night and stayed there until—until she—they found her. [*Covers his face.* DARTREY *puts his arm around him and presses his shoulder.*] I wandered round there for days. Wasn't so bad while it was light. People to talk to. All of us on the same errand. Searching. Searching. Searching. Hoping—some of them. I didn't. I knew from the first. I *knew.* It was horrible at night alone. I had to try and sleep sometimes. They'd wake me when the bodies were brought in. Hers came toward dawn one morning. Three little babies, all twined in each other's arms, lying next to her. Three little babies. Cruel that.

Wasn't it? [*Waits as he thinks; then he goes on dully, evenly, with no emotion.*] Fancy! She'd been out in that water for days and nights. All alone. Tossed about. Days and nights. She! who'd never hurt a soul. Couldn't. She was always laughing and happy. Drifting about. All alone. Quite peaceful she looked. Except—except—— [*Covers his eyes and groans. In a little while he looks up at* DARTREY *and touches his left eye.*] This. Gone. Gulls. [DARTREY *draws his breath in sharply and turns a little away.*] In a few hours the cuts opened. The salt-water had kept them closed.

DARTREY

Cuts?

GILRUTH

[*Nods.*] Her head. And her face. Cuts. Blood after all that time. [*He clenches and unclenches his hands nervously and furiously. He gets up slowly, walks over to the fireplace, shivers, then braces himself, trying to shake off the horror of his thoughts. Then he begins to speak brokenly and tremblingly, endeavoring to moisten his lips with a dry tongue.*]

Never saw anything to equal the kindness of those poor peasants. They gave the clothes from their bodies; the blankets from their beds. And took nothing. Not a thing. "We're all in this," they said. "We're doing our best. It's little enough." That's what they said. Pretty fine, the Irish of Queenstown. Eh?

[DARTREY *nods. He does not trust himself to speak.*]

A monument. That's what the Irish peasants of Queenstown should have. A monument. Never slept, some of them. Wrapped the soaking women in their shawls—and the little children. Took off their wet things and gave them dry, warm ones. Fed them with broths they cooked themselves. Spent their poor savings on brandy for them. Stripped the clothes off their own backs for them to travel in when they were well enough to go. And wouldn't take a thing. Great people, the Irish of Queenstown. Nothing much the matter with them. A monument. That's what they should have. And poetry. [*Thinks for a little while, then goes on.*] Laid out the bodies, too; just as reverently as if they were their own people. They laid her out. And prayed over her. And watched with me until she was put into the— Such a tiny little shell it was, too. She had no father or mother or brothers or sisters. I was all she had. That's why I buried her here. Kensal Green. She'll rest easy there. [*He walks about distractedly. Suddenly he stops and with his hands extended upwards as if in prayer, he cries.*] Out of my depths I cry to Thee. I call on you to curse them. Curse the Prussian brutes, made in Your likeness, but with hearts as the lowest of beasts. Curse them. May their hopes wither. May everything they set their hearts on rot. Send them pestilence, disease and every foul torture they have visited on Your people. Send the Angel of Death to rid the earth of them and their spawn. May their souls burn in hell for all eternity. [*Quickly to* DARTREY.] And if there is a God they will. But is there a good God

that such things can be and yet no sign from Him? Listen. I didn't believe in war. I reasoned against it. I shouted for Peace, and thousands of cravens like me. I thought God was using this universal slaughter for a purpose. When His end was accomplished He would cry to the warring peoples, "Stop!" It was His will, I thought, that out of much evil might come permanent good. That was my faith. It has gone. How can there be a good God to look down on His people tortured and maimed and butchered? The women, whose lives were devoted to Him, defiled. His temples looted, filled with the filth of the soldiery, and then destroyed. And yet no sign. Oh, no. My faith is gone. Now I want to murder and torture and massacre the foul brutes. . . . I'm going out, Dartrey. In any way. Just a private. I'll dig, carry my load, eat their rations. Vermin! Mud. Ache in the cold and scorch in the heat. I will welcome it. Anything to stop the gnawing here, and the throbbing here. [*Beating at his head and heart.*] Anything to find vent for my hatred. [*Moving restlessly about.*] I'm going through Ireland first. Every town and village. It's our work now. It's Irishmen's work. All the Catholics will be in now. No more conscientious-objecting! They can't. It's a war on women and little children. All right. No Irish-Catholic will rest easy; eat, sleep and go his day's round after this. The call has gone out. America, too. She'll come in. You watch. She can't stay out. She's founded on Liberty. She'll fight for it. You see. It's clean against unclean. Red blood against

black filth. Carrion. Beasts. Swine. [*Drops into a chair mumbling incoherently. Takes a long breath; looks at* DARTREY.] I'm selling out everything at home.

DARTREY

Why?

GILRUTH

I'm not going back. I'm bringing everything over here. England, France, Russia, Belgium, Serbia—they can have it. All of it. They've suffered. Only now do I know how much. Only now. [*Fiercely.*] I want to tear them—tear them as they've torn me. As they mangled her. [*Grits his teeth and claws with his fingers.*] Tear them—that's what I want to do. May I live to do it. May the war never end until every dirty Prussian is rotting in his grave. Then a quick end for me, too. I've nothing now. Nothing. [*Gets up again wearily and dejectedly; all the blazing passion burnt out momentarily.*] This was to have been my wedding-day; our wedding day. Now she's lying there, done to death by Huns. A few days ago all youth and freshness and courage and love. Lying disfigured in her little coffin. I know what you meant now by wanting to go back for the third time. I couldn't understand it the other day. It seemed that everyone should hate war. But you've seen them. You know them. And you want to destroy them. That's it. Destroy. . . . The call is all over the world by now. Civilization will be in arms. . . . To hell with your Pacifists. It's another name for

cowards. They'd lose those nearest them; the honour of their women; the liberty of their people—and never strike a blow. To hell with them. It's where they should be. I was one of them. No more. Wherever I meet them I'll spit in their faces. They disgrace the women they were born of; the country they claim. . . . To hell with them.

DARTREY

[*Tries to soothe him.*] You must try and get some grip on yourself.

GILRUTH

[*His fingers ceaselessly locking and unlocking.*] I'll be all right. It's a relief to talk to you. [*Sees the preparations for* DARTREY'S *departure.*] Are you off?

DARTREY

Yes. To-night.

GILRUTH

I envy you now. I wish I were going. But I will soon. Ireland first. I must have my say there. What will the "Sinn Feiners" say to the *Lusitania* murder? I want to meet some of them. What are our wrongs of generations to this horror? All humanity is at stake here. I'll talk to them. . . . I must. They'll have to do something now or go down branded through the generations as Pro-German. Can a man have a worse epitaph? No decent Irishman will bear that; every loyal Irishman must loathe them. . . . I'll talk to them—soul

to soul. . . . Sorry, Dartrey. You have your own sorrow. . . . Good of you to put up with me. Now I'll go. . . . [*Goes to door, stops, takes out wallet.*] Just one thing. If it won't bother you. [*Tapping some papers.*] I've mentioned you here. If I don't come through —see to a few things for me. Will you? They're not much. Will you?

DARTREY

Of course I will.

GILRUTH

[*Simply.*] Thank you. You've always been decent to me. . . . Dartrey. To-day! You would have been my best man—and she's——

DARTREY

[*Shaking him by the shoulders.*] Come, pull up.

GILRUTH

I will. I'll be all right. In a little while I'll be along out there. I hope I serve under you. [*Grips his hand.*] Good-bye.

DARTREY

Keep in touch with me.

GILRUTH

All right. [*Passes out, opens and closes the outer door behind him and disappears in the street.* DARTREY *resumes his preparations.*]

Written February, 1919

GOD'S OUTCAST

Portraying the meeting of a man and a woman in the waiting room of an isolated railway-station.

GOD'S OUTCAST

The waiting-room is old, shabby and neglected. It shelters but few and has little of greeting.

Rough benches are placed against its crude walls on which are the remnants of faded time-tables, government announcements and rewards offered by the authorities for the detection of time-old criminals.

In the centre of the room there is a stove with a pipe running up through the roof. Beside it are two rough wooden chairs. A dim, banked-in fire is burning sullenly.

Two faint gas-jets on each side of the door opening on to the platform feebly light a portion of the room.

It is the most silent time of night.

There is only the gentlest sound of rain pattering on dead leaves heard through a broken window.

A WOMAN, *wrapped closely in furs, comes in slowly through the door and, without looking around, goes to the stove and limply and noiselessly draws up a chair. She sinks slowly into it, sits back and closes her eyes in faintness or languor.*

Time passes with no sound but her fitful breathing. The movements of her body suggest that she is crying. A slight moan comes from her lips. It is low, feeble, despairing.

Out of the darkness a man rises from a corner and listens. He is shrouded in a heavy ulster, the collar turned up concealing the lower part of his face.

As the moans continue he walks slowly over to the woman and stands, bowed, peering down at her. He puts his hand out hesitatingly and timidly touches her.

She does not start; just looks up at him dully with neither fear nor interest.

THE MAN

Don't do that. [*She shivers and moves slightly so that her face is turned from him.*]

Deep in trouble, aren't ye? [*She does not speak.*]

So am I. [*Still she is silent.*]

Yet there is nothing can have made you suffer as I am suffering now. —— Is there any comfort in that? [*Her shoulders contract as if through cold; he opens the door of the stove; a faint flicker of flame lights up her face. She is quite young; white and tear-stained. As the man stoops down to mend the fire with an implement he is seen to be rugged, powerful and past middle-age. His voice is that of an educated man: his manner, although distraught, is courteous and gentle.*]

The wind cuts tonight. And the rain! I heard nothing until you opened the door. You didn't drive up? [*She shakes her head.*]

Walked? [*She nods.*]

Across the moor? [*Again she signs 'yes.'*]

So did I. [*Shivers.*]

It's ankle-deep in places. [*Looks at her boots; kneels, takes out his handkerchief and wipes them.*]

THE WOMAN

[*Withdrawing them.*] Oh, don't.

THE MAN

All right. [*Rises; waits; she does not speak.*]

Lost your way? [*She shakes her head.*]

You have not come for a train? [*She nods.*]

You'll have a long wait. [*She turns away impatiently.*]

I'll go out on the platform if you'd rather I did.

[*She shakes her head as though it were a matter of indifference to her. He continues to look down at her, yearningly, discouragedly. Convinced finally he is not wanted he softly creeps back to the corner and huddles in the dark, covering his eyes with his hands.*]

[*The woman looks up and listens: misses him from beside her; looks around slowly, glimpsing into the dark corners. The man is breathing heavily inward; his body quivers with suppressed sobs. She rises, goes over to him and stands looking down at him. Following a compassionate impulse, she touches him on the shoulder. He drops his hands quickly and springs up.*]

THE WOMAN

Why do you cry?

THE MAN

To get relief. Just as you did. As you are doing.

THE WOMAN

Does it relieve you?

THE MAN

No. Does it you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

There are millions of women crying at this moment. —— Because they've lost someone. —— Someone dear to them. —— Have you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

The tears that are being shed — by women. —— It eases their grief. —— As children. —— Children and women cry so easily. —— And forget so soon. —— When men weep their sorrow hardens. —— Tears hurt them. —— They scald. —— They are unbearable. —— When they cry they have reached the end. —— I have.

THE WOMAN

[*Gently takes him by the sleeve and leads him to the fire. She moves a chair in front of it and motions*

him to sit. She draws up the other chair and sinks into it.]

Tell me.

THE MAN

May I?

THE WOMAN

Do. You've lost some one?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

Your wife?

THE MAN

Years ago. That's healed.

THE WOMAN

Your son?

THE MAN

[*Vehemently.*] My son, brother, play-fellow, confidante — all in one.

THE WOMAN

[*Nodding understandingly.*] I know.

THE MAN

[*Distractedly.*] All in one. —— Gone. Lost. Rotting. Oh-h-h!

[*Swaying as he moans. After a while he goes on fiercely.*]

What a huddling, shuffling, choking thing life is. The more we love, the more eagerly we bruise and maim and gibe and scoff at and tease and tear the one we love.

—— We do. —— Propinquity does that. —— We're ashamed to be affectionate all the time. —— The subconscious brute in us. —— The instinct that drives us to *hurt* those we would give the last breath in our bodies to *save* from hurt. ——That's our heritage. —— All the sins of all the ages have left their lees in our brains. —— All the foulness of centuries is sown in the infant and it ripens and throws out its rancid growth. —— From them come the murderers and brutes and ruffians who butcher. —— And yet they prate of Free-Will! Of carving our destinies! —— Oh, we can carve them. —— But when we reach a certain point the 'throw-back' in us presses on the thumb of fate and it turns downwards and drives us its way. We are driven from within. —— And we hurt—hurt—always hurt.

THE WOMAN

Sometimes the thumb of fate points upwards and we love.

THE MAN

The stronger we love the more we bruise.

THE WOMAN

Did you?

THE MAN

God forgive me. May the good God forgive me. As I look back I see I did. Yes, I see it. —— I'd put my hands under his feet to walk on yet I'd refuse him some little wish that meant present happiness to him. —— Death makes all things clear, even to the living. —— I

see it. —— Yes, I see it. —— I tended him as a baby when his mother died. —— I sat night and day with him when he was ill. —— Companioned him as he grew year by year. —— And all the while I was a tyrant. —— I wanted him solely to myself. Jealous of all who came near him. —— Next to his God his country. Before all else — save his God — his country. —— Better a clod of earth on your native land than a prince in any other. —— Be the humblest outcast in your own country rather than possess millions and renounce your birthright. —— Always that. —— Loyalty. Service. Live your life *in* and go to death *for* — your country. —— And he listened eagerly. —— He agreed readily. —— Little did I know I was shaping the weapon that would cut off our lives. —— They're cut off. —— Ended. —— The weapon has cut surely. —— Why should you have to listen to this. [*Rising.*]

THE WOMAN

Go on. ——[*Waits.*] I want you to go on.

THE MAN

[*Beats his forehead with the back of his hand; sits.*] When he went to school I relearnt the lessons of my youth so that I might share in his little mind. Every step of his university-life I kept pace with. —— He followed all my well-beaten roads. —— Everything he enjoyed I made myself like. —— I adapted my tastes, my habits, my life to his. —— I was wrong. Lives must develop *alone* — apart. —— When they grow to-

gether you reap the whirlwind. —— Cut off one and the survivor has nothing left. —— Unfair to both. —— I was unfair. —— To him. —— To myself. —— I am punished. —— Affection made me a despot, a slave; father, brother, twin — in thought, in work, in play — in death — [*His head droops as his hands clench tightly.*] In death.

THE WOMAN

How did he die?

THE MAN

Following my teaching. —— For his country!

THE WOMAN

[*Shivering and contracting.*] I see. —— Oh yes. I see.

THE MAN

The body I had urged him to strengthen; the brain I had helped him to discipline; the loyalty I had instilled into him since he could first understand — I sent it all — to — what? To end in — just three words:—"Killed in Action!" —— And I am left. —— I wanted them to take me. Look at me.—— [*Springs up, straightening his powerful figure.*] I'm strong as he ever was. I don't tire. I've never known fatigue. I could *lead* men. I could *serve* too. My organs are sound. My limbs whole. My brain keen. —— But no. I've lived too long. By a few years. Just a few years. So I was not wanted. —— And I, the tyrant, followed as a slave the boy who had glorious youth to offer in

the sublime adventure. Followed as a dog — at — heel. From camp to camp, I watched him straighten and bronze and move as a machine. .I saw the first gleam in his eye of the desire to kill. Heard the new note in his voice as he spoke the abrupt word of command. —— At the dock as he went aboard the troopship he said, voice clear and eye-shining:—"Father, at last I can *serve!*" I had not taught him in vain. —— I had sent him to serve and to die. —— I, useless, *live.* Unfair, eh? Unjust, isn't it? But isn't it unjust? My few years could mean nothing. He was just at the bud. —— Letters from the ship. From huts. From the trenches. Accounts of attack. Sometimes retreat. Now buoyant. Now uncertain. But always the glory: "I serve!" —— Now he stands clean and bright and holy before his God. *"Present!"* he cried, when his name was called. —— Aye! "I served and died, my God, for You and my country." —— And he sleeps lightly in a shallow grave under a white cross in the land he went to save. —— "He served and died." The epitaph of millions.

THE WOMAN

[*In a strained, hoarse voice.*] When was he killed?

THE MAN

Weeks back. The news came this morning. —— Only this morning. —— Yet I seemed to know it. —— For days. —— Nights. —— Long —— interminable nights. —— I felt he was trying to speak to me. —— And I strained to listen. —— At times I'd call out to him. ——

I wonder if he heard? —— He must have heard! —— And all those days he was lying in his narrow resting-place, —— and I only knew today. —— [*Wearily.*] I couldn't stay there. —— No. —— Not where he was born. Where he grew; and ripened. Everything was of him. —— The whinny of a pony seemed to wail: "Master's gone." —— The shrinking, red-eyed servants mute and piteous. Their lips seemed to phrase, "He's gone!" —— To-night, — just before I came away — his dog thrust a hot snout into my palm and whined. His eyes were frightened, entreating. He seemed to *know*. —— So I pitied him. —— And killed him. —— He'd have died of grief. Better a bullet. —— He's at peace. —— Dropped without a cry. —— He's lying there as if asleep — paws out — head on them. At peace — so must I be. —— My work's done. —— I want to rest. [*Sighs tiredly.*]

THE WOMAN

[*Her eyes distended.*] Is that why you came here?

THE MAN

[*Nods.*] My last journey. I never thought to see a living being again. —— Then you came in. You cried. It seemed no one had the right to cry before a grief like mine. So I spoke to you. I told you nothing could make you suffer as I was suffering. Wasn't I right?

THE WOMAN

[*Vehemently.*] *No.* Indeed—No.

THE MAN

[*Incredulously.*] You think your sorrow greater than mine?

THE WOMAN

Indeed it is.

THE MAN

[*Impatiently.*] Ah!

THE WOMAN

You have had years with your boy. You watched him grow from a baby to youth — to manhood. Always beside him. You shared all those years with him — happy. You have them to look back on. You have the remembrance of a full life.

THE MAN

Remembrance! It is life to woman. It makes it full. It is agony to me. It leaves mine empty.

THE WOMAN

There are millions of empty lives that will fill again.

THE MAN

Mine won't. It's ended now.

THE WOMAN

How?

THE MAN

It's finished. —— Done. My work's over. I'm going to find peace.

THE WOMAN

[*Eagerly; her eyes shining.*] I'm going to find peace, too.

THE MAN

You'll find it in *life*. You're young. On the border. The years stretch before you. They're behind me.

THE WOMAN

[*Breathlessly.*] They're behind me too. My life is buried, too, under a little white cross.

THE MAN

[*Glowing.*] In France?

THE WOMAN

In Palestine. My love is buried in the shadow of Nazareth. He, too, died to save mankind.

THE MAN

Your husband?

THE WOMAN

Yes — my husband. For a month. Just a month. [*He shivers.*] He was *my* playmate, *my* confidante, my Lord, my all. There has never been a day since girlhood that he has not been with me or in my thoughts. There has not been an act of mine he did not influence. I have lived only for him — for the time we could be together always. —— *He* could not have lived without me. I can't without him. —— The news came to *me* today. —— So *I* — came — here.

THE MAN

[*Thinks: then looks at her. In horror.*] What train did you come to meet?

THE WOMAN

The midnight-express.

THE MAN

[*Breathlessly.*] It doesn't stop. —— [*In a whisper.*] It — *does* — *not* — *stop!*

THE WOMAN

I know.

THE MAN

[*Looking piercingly into her eyes.*] Not — *that!*

THE WOMAN

[*Unflinching.*] Yes—*that.*

THE MAN

It would be horrible.

THE WOMAN

Why?

THE MAN

For me? What matters. I'm old. But you —

THE WOMAN

My life is buried with my love in the Holy Land.

THE MAN

But can't you see — ?

THE WOMAN

I join him tonight. Wherever he is I am going to him.

THE MAN

[*Roughly.*] I won't let you.

THE WOMAN

[*Dully.*] Very well. Stop me — here. I'll do it somewhere else.

THE MAN

[*Moaning and muttering.*] The only thing. She's right. The only thing.

THE WOMAN

It's why you're here.

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

An accident — they'll say?

THE MAN

[*Nods.*] It was in my mind, too.

THE WOMAN

The thumb of fate is pointing down, fellow traveller.

[*Faintly in the distance can be heard the screech of the train. She leans against the door, momentarily weak.*]

THE MAN

[*Hoarsely, beside her.*] Don't do it.

THE WOMAN

[*Faintly.*] I must. [*Rallying.*] I'm right now. Give me your hand, fellow traveller. [*Catches his hand. The whistle sounds nearer.*]

THE MAN

Are you afraid?

THE WOMAN

[*Firmly.*] No. It will be just a leap in the dark.

THE MAN

[*Nods.*] A leap in the dark — then peace.

THE WOMAN

[*Kneeling, hands clasped, looking upward.*] Oh Thou who lookest down on us all, who knows our hearts curse the wretches who brought this waste of grief on mankind. May their power wither from this earth. May they be accursed even to the third generation. May their rulers perish by the hand of Justice. May their followers groan under the yoke they placed on Your people. May their hearts ache with misery until their people is purged through expiation of their foul crimes. Curse them, oh my Lord. Curse them. [*Rises.*]